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Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly

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Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 62/131 on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. The report provides an overview of the deliberations held on the priority theme "Promoting full employment and decent work for all" and issues pertaining to social groups during the forty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development. It also addresses the emerging issues of social protection and youth employment and examines challenges for mainstreaming disability in the development agenda. In conclusion, the report highlights a number of recommendations for achieving full employment and decent work for all.

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I. Introduction

1. In the context of its review of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly and in accordance with its multi-year programme of work, the Commission for Social Development discussed "Promoting full employment and decent work for all" as the priority theme for the 2007-2008 implementation cycle. The review segment held in 2007 identified obstacles, best practices and approaches for promoting full employment and decent work. The policy segment, held during its forty-sixth session of the Commission in February 2008, resulted in an action-oriented resolution submitted to the Economic and Social Council for adoption.[1] In accordance with Council resolution 2007/2, it was decided to keep full and productive employment and decent work for all under review in both the Commission and the General Assembly.

2. The present report highlights the major points discussed by the Commission at its policy session in relation to the priority theme and the social groups. The report also examines three emerging issues from the perspective of the priority theme: social protection, youth employment and mainstreaming disability in the development agenda.

II. Synopsis of the substantive discussions held during the forty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development on the priority theme "Promoting full employment and decent work for all"

A. Policy framework for employment and decent work

3. The World Summit for Social Development emphasized the central role of full and productive employment in reducing poverty and achieving equitable and sustainable development. At the 2005 World Summit, world leaders made the commitment to strongly support fair globalization and resolved to make the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people, a central objective of [their] relevant national and international policies (see resolution 60/1, para. 47). In keeping with that commitment, the Secretary-General, in his report on the work of the Organization issued in 2006, proposed to include a new target, echoing the commitment of the 2005 World Summit, under Millennium Development Goal 1.[2]

4. The Ministerial Declaration adopted at the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in 2006 identified specific steps towards promoting full employment and decent work and called for the development of 10-year action plans. The decent work agenda of the International Labour Organization (ILO), which incorporates employment creation, social protection, fundamental principles and rights at work, social dialogue and equal opportunities, provides a framework of

[1] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2008, Supplement No. 6* (E/2008/26), chap.I.A, draft resolution II.

[2] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first Session, Supplement No. 1* and corrigendum (A/61/1 and Corr.1), para. 24.

reference for achieving the objective of full and productive employment and decent work and ensuring policy coherence in the economic and social areas. The 2008 International Labour Conference adopted a Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, designed to strengthen the capacity of ILO to promote its Decent Work Agenda and forge an effective response to the growing challenges of globalization,[3] in which, inter alia, international and regional organizations with mandates in closely related fields are invited to work with ILO on the implementation of the integrated approach to the promotion of decent work for all.

5. Achieving full and productive employment and decent work requires a major policy commitment as, in most countries, economic growth remains insufficient to create decent jobs, while in others, higher growth rates have not translated into the generation of better and more productive jobs, especially for the poor. The failure of globalization to create quality jobs therefore deserves priority attention.

6. At the international level, policies should focus on the challenges posed by trade and financial market liberalization, foreign direct investment, fiscal policy and labour market reforms, as well as international migration. Labour mobility is an integral feature of globalization and an issue for international cooperation. International trade and sound financial systems can be effective tools to create favourable conditions for the development of all countries. However, trade barriers and unfair trading practices continue to have negative effects on employment growth in developing countries. Enhanced international cooperation, including through fulfilling commitments for official development assistance and debt relief, is important to fully implement the decent work agenda. Furthermore, greater policy coherence among trade, aid, economic policies and social policies is essential. The international community must address the employment implications of global macroeconomic conditions and of the international trading system to that effect.

7. At the national level, policy efforts should aim at economic growth, employment generation and productivity growth while keeping the focus on the promotion of the decent work agenda. National development strategies should enhance coherence between financial and economic policies on the one hand, and employment, market policies and social policies on the other hand. It is, therefore, critical that the employment objective be an integral component of macroeconomic policies. Moreover, market efficiency and flexibility need to be balanced with considerations of social protection. While opening to international trade and foreign investment can create opportunities, it is important to ensure that the benefits are fairly shared and that those who may be negatively affected are granted basic support.

8. Investing in full and decent work opportunities constitutes a commitment to fairness and justice, and to more effective public policy and better governance. Strategies for employment creation should address the challenges of income inequality, social exclusion and discrimination, and extending labour standards and social protection programmes. Stronger systems for guaranteeing a minimum wage are needed as well, to ensure that the lowest paid workers receive some dividends from economic growth.

[3] See http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_094042.pdf.

1. Agriculture and enterprise development

9. Agricultural and small enterprise development plays a special role in advancing the goal of employment and decent work at the national level. The agricultural sector still accounts for a very large share of total employment in a majority of developing countries and, therefore, priority needs to be given to enhancing rural and agricultural development. Policies should be directed at raising investments in rural infrastructure, expanding farmers' access to markets and financial services, improving agricultural productivity, and facilitating diversification from agriculture to other economic activities. Improving rural labour market outcomes should be an integral part of pro-poor growth strategies and poverty reduction strategies.

10. The promotion of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, including cooperative enterprises, is essential to job creation and productivity growth, as well as to moving large numbers of people out of poverty. Towards this end, policies need to focus on fostering enterprise and entrepreneurship, improving business environment and regulatory frameworks, providing access to markets and credit, services, information and new technologies and encouraging productive investment, as well as raising the quality of jobs. Particular attention should be given to policies that promote small and medium-sized enterprises and women's participation and entrepreneurship.

11. In addition, national policies should facilitate participation of small and medium-sized enterprises in domestic and international trade, as well as the transition of small and medium-sized enterprises in the informal sector to the formal sector.

2. Education and skills

12. In a globalizing world, where demand for knowledge and skills evolves rapidly, low-skilled and poorly educated workers are at a clear disadvantage in meeting labour market needs. Ensuring the employability of those large numbers of workers is both a social objective and the pathway to increasing productivity and competitiveness.

13. Such an objective requires the implementation of national reforms in education and training systems. Priority attention should be given to assisting all workers without exclusion, including young people, in accessing education, vocational and technical training, upgrading skills and acquisition of new knowledge so as to improve their employability. In this context, there is a critical need to ensure sufficient investment in lifelong learning, raising the quality of education and strengthening public-private partnerships. Special emphasis should also be placed on providing special training to social groups in need of core work skills and basic education to enable them to participate in the labour market.

14. Investing in lifelong learning is an effective strategy to address the challenges of technological change and globalization. Lifelong learning improves the knowledge, skills and capacities of those who are already working. Education and skills acquisition programmes have a larger positive effect on employability and access to employment and decent work when they are part of a continuum of policy interventions such as job placement services, counselling, vocational training and retraining, and re-employment assistance.

15. National efforts to promote employment creation will have limited chances of success unless concerted efforts are made to empower women by promoting gender equality and improving their participation in the labour force. This will require policies that address the root causes of women's underrepresentation in the labour force, such as gender inequalities in education, training and health care. Technical and vocational training programmes catering to the special needs of low-income women should be developed.

3. Social protection and social dialogue

16. The goal of full and productive employment and decent work cannot be achieved unless access to basic social protection is guaranteed. Against a background of increasing insecurity in the labour market, social protection is needed to allow for the necessary adjustments and transitions. Whereas providing workers and their families with minimum income security is a matter of fairness, redistributive policies should also be viewed as an investment in national productive capacity. In the present context of globalization, social protection programmes should adapt to current labour market conditions. Extending coverage to all, including workers in the informal sector and migrant workers, should be considered a priority in national and international strategies for poverty eradication and employment promotion.

17. Appropriate institutions and regulation, including frameworks for social dialogue such as the tripartite decision-making process, and labour laws that protect workers' fundamental rights, are important elements for the effective and fair functioning of labour markets. Increased social dialogue between Governments and stakeholders can help ensure that national policies are balanced and comprehensive and receive large support. In this context, principles guaranteeing freedom of association and freedom of expression enshrined in international and national laws and regulations should be fully implemented. Furthermore, social dialogue should be inclusive of all stakeholders, including employers and workers organizations, trade unions and civil society organizations.

4. Role of the United Nations system

18. Advancing full employment and decent work as part of the broad development agenda requires a coherent approach and collaboration with all relevant United Nations entities, particularly ILO, civil society and other partners at all levels. Following the adoption by the Economic and Social Council of the 2006 Ministerial Declaration and resolution 2007/2, on the role of the United Nations system in providing full and productive employment and decent work for all, which encourage the organizations of the United Nations system to support efforts to mainstream the goals of full and productive employment and decent work in their policies, programmes and activities, there have been some encouraging signs that the United Nations system, including the international financial institutions, has been placing more emphasis on employment issues.

19. The ILO decent work country programmes are important vehicles for supporting national development efforts with which other United Nations entities need to collaborate. The United Nations system should also work together in using and implementing the toolkit for mainstreaming employment and decent work, a practical set of guidelines developed by ILO and endorsed by the Chief Executives

Board for Coordination to help the agencies, funds and programmes to assess and improve the employment and decent work outcomes of the policies and programmes they support. The toolkit should contribute to system-wide coherence in development, poverty reduction and employment promotion. It is expected that the ILO will further develop and strengthen its strategies for social protection and extending social security coverage. The United Nations system should also continue providing support in developing projects and programmes aimed at generating employment opportunities and capacity-building, and intensify efforts towards strengthening the employment content of poverty reduction strategies.

20. The Development Cooperation Forum and the Annual Ministerial Review of the Economic and Social Council could consider assessing the impact of activities and programmes of the relevant United Nations organizations on employment generation and decent work in developing countries. The Development Cooperation Forum could also encourage sharing good national practices among United Nations system partners.

B. Issues pertaining to social groups

21. Women, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, migrants and other disadvantaged groups are often disproportionately subjected to social and economic exclusion in the labour market, education and health care. Against this background, policies to achieve full employment and decent work for all should include specific measures to promote gender equality and foster social integration, including by providing the disadvantaged groups with equal access to employment opportunities and social protection and ensuring their full participation in the workforce. Employment and poverty reduction strategies should target these groups with a particular focus on addressing their marginalization in the labour market and protecting their rights at work.

1. Violence against women in the work environment

22. In addressing violence against women in the work environment, there is a need to look at the interlinkages between decent work and gender discrimination, women's participation in labour markets and effective policy interventions to eliminate all forms of violence against women.

23. Gender discrimination in labour markets undermines decent work by limiting the range of work opportunities and choices for women, reducing their incomes and increasing inequalities in labour market outcomes between men and women. This subordination tends to perpetuate violence against women at work, in the community and in the family. Violence against women at work can best be addressed within the framework of labour market policies. Moreover, such interventions can also have a positive impact on reducing violence against women in other spheres of life.

24. Gender discrimination at work has a significant social and economic cost for society. In addition to the emotional and psychological suffering it causes, gender discrimination in the workplace entails a waste of human talents and a loss in labour productivity which, in turn, negatively impacts economic growth and slows down efforts aimed at reducing poverty.

25. In the last 10 years, several positive developments in women's participation in labour markets have occurred. Gender gaps in education are narrowing everywhere and more women than men enrol in tertiary education in most regions of the world. Women's entry into the labour market continues to increase in most parts of the world. The ratio of women to men in high-status jobs has also increased, although women still constitute a minority of workers at the highest levels.

26. Despite these positive developments, numerous challenges remain. A large number of women are still working without pay and women are overrepresented in the informal sector as well as in non-standard jobs. In general, workloads are much higher for women than men, notably due to the many more hours spent in unpaid work. In addition, women continue to earn less than men on average, even for the same type of work or for work of equal value.

27. Different types of gender discrimination still persist in the work environment: occupational segregation, particularly due to pregnancy and motherhood; discrimination in remuneration; unequal division of paid and unpaid work between men and women; and sexual harassment, particularly towards young, dependent, single, separated, widowed and migrant women. All these types of discrimination are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, and they underpin gender inequality at work, which, in turn, underscores various forms of violence against women.

28. A combination of policy measures is required to abolish gender discrimination and violence against women. Among them, an effort to improve the measurement and monitoring of trends in women's labour market outcomes relative to men's is needed. Effective laws and enforcement mechanisms that incorporate a gender perspective are fundamental to curb violence against women, including incentives or promotional mechanisms in addition to sanctions. A coherent set of public policy interventions that act simultaneously upon the different types of discrimination needs to be designed. Enactment of legislation securing women's rights to property, inheritance, credit and social security, among the full range of social and economic rights, is critical to women's empowerment and to support entrepreneurship. Comprehensive labour market policies and regulations aimed at eliminating gender-based discrimination in the realm of employment and work must also be strengthened. Although the sequencing and mix of these policy measures can vary depending on national circumstances, political leadership and committed and well-equipped employers' and workers' organizations are essential.

2. Ageing and development

29. The Second World Assembly on Ageing, held in Madrid in 2002, recognized ageing as an evolving developmental phenomenon which needs to be addressed at the global level as well as within the framework of national development and poverty eradication strategies.

30. The first five-year review and appraisal of progress in implementing the recommendations of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing was conducted in 2007. The results of the national review and appraisal exercises were analysed during regional meetings organized by the United Nations regional commissions and presented at the Commission for Social Development at its forty-sixth session.

31. The review and appraisal revealed a lack of awareness of the linkages between ageing and development. Inadequate or lack of disaggregated data and research on various aspects of ageing and the life of older people, particularly in Africa, remain a major impediment for ageing-specific policies and mainstreaming efforts. As a consequence, very few ageing-related activities were carried out in some regions.

32. Strengthening the institutional and human resource capacities to formulate and implement ageing-related policy measures, as well as to integrate ageing into development plans and strategies, was identified as a high priority in most regions. However, several countries in the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) region and some in the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) region emphasized that this was unlikely without financial assistance from the international community.

33. In contrast, countries in the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region, where ageing is more advanced and has become a matter of public concern, emphasize the need for mainstreaming ageing across all policy areas. Several countries in the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) region have taken legislative initiatives on ageing. However, implementation has been limited due to the lack of related institutional mechanisms.

34. One of the main tenets of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing is that older persons must be full participants in the development process, as actors on their own behalf, particularly in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes on ageing. Meanwhile, in many regions, there tends to be a paternalistic approach to older persons. In the Economic and Social Commission for Western Africa (ESCWA) region for instance, decision-making on older persons' health-related matters is often in the hands of their families. Even in the ECE region, which has a high rate of participation of older persons in policy formulation, the bottom-up approach advocated for review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing has been used on a limited basis.

35. In most regions, access to affordable and quality health care is a major issue for older persons. The lack of training in gerontology for health-care personnel and social workers is acute almost everywhere, while the abuse and neglect of older persons by health-care workers is quite prevalent. In response to these concerns, several countries in the ESCWA region reported instituting some basic training for all medical doctors. While there is a need to partly reorient medical services in order to meet the needs of the growing numbers of older persons, priority should also be given to promoting healthy ageing as a lifelong process.

36. All regions of the world have experienced, albeit to different extents, changes in the roles and structure of families and communities that have a direct bearing on the role of women as traditional caretakers and on the welfare of older women. However, very few developing countries have taken steps towards establishing some form of formal caregiving support.

37. Managing an ageing and possibly shrinking labour force has become an issue of serious concern in the ECE region. Consequently, a number of countries have taken measures to encourage women to join and/or to remain in the labour force, as well as to facilitate the employment of older workers. The establishment of family-friendly policies to help reconcile work, family care and family life is also viewed as crucial for improving the quality of life of persons of all ages.

III. Emerging challenges

38. Three issues have been gaining increasing attention recently in the context of social development: extending social protection and establishing universal, basic social protection in all countries; promoting youth employment; and mainstreaming disability in the development agenda. Social protection is an essential component of the decent work agenda and has significantly contributed to the reduction of poverty. Youth employment is one of the priorities of the United Nations development agenda. It is identified in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, both as an important target in its own right under Millennium Development Goal 1 and as a key contribution to achieving the other Millennium Development Goals. The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its recent entry into force entail implementing measures to ensure full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in society.

A. Extending social protection

39. In the context of increasing labour market flexibility alongside growing informality, the need for social security systems that facilitate social integration and reduce poverty while providing an enabling framework for economic growth and social development is getting stronger. ILO estimates that 80 per cent of the world population has no adequate social protection, while 50 per cent has no coverage at all. Furthermore, a number of countries have cut back their social protection spending. The reasons range from declining public revenues due to demographic pressures to general misconceptions about the role and benefits of social protection. Among the main challenges to social protection provisions are the lack of understanding of its benefits, the real and perceived lack of funds, low technical capacity for delivery, poor governance and low political will.

40. Developing countries face significant challenges in establishing systems of social protection and/or expanding coverage under existing systems. Limited public resources are often thought to be better invested in promoting economic growth rather than spent on social transfers. Many countries in transition continue to experience diminishing social protection, including inadequate old age pensions and less protection for large families or persons with disabilities. Even countries with well-established social protection systems face challenges to social security as demographic trends threaten the financial viability of social protection systems and resources have to be increased for health care and pensions for their ageing populations. Furthermore, increasing numbers work under contractual arrangements that do not provide for unemployment, health care and pension benefits.

41. The current debate on social protection concentrates on its fiscal and economic affordability. Too often, it is assumed that social protection has high economic costs without economic benefits. There is also a perception of a trade-off between economic performance and expenditure on social protection. Another common perception is that some social protection provisions may lead to dependency.

42. Studies contradict these perceptions and clearly demonstrate that the provision of social protection has many positive outcomes. It significantly helps to reduce the possible negative impact of reforms aimed at improving labour market functioning

by minimizing vulnerability caused by structural and labour market adjustments and lessening the impact of financial crises on populations.

43. Social protection also helps to support demand for domestic goods, which is beneficial from both an economic and employment point of view. Furthermore, social protection contributes to social inclusion and stability by bringing the excluded and the poor into the mainstream of society.

44. Examples of the positive impact of social protection schemes abound. Social security transfers reduce poverty by at least 50 per cent in nearly all the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries and inequality by 50 per cent in many European countries. Studies also point to a fairly strong correlation between per hour productivity and per capita expenditure on social protection in OECD countries, where high social expenditure is conducive to good economic performance.[4]

45. Similar accounts of the strong positive social and economic impact of social protection can be found in developing countries. The conditional cash transfers programme, *Bolsa Familia*, in Brazil improved school attendance and access to health care. Positive enrolment effects and better school attendance due to cash transfers were also observed in Bangladesh, Colombia, Mexico, Nicaragua and Zambia. In Chile, Colombia, Malawi, Mexico and South Africa, cash transfers had positive effects on the height, weight and nutritional status of children. A basic cash transfer programme, *Oportunidades*, in Mexico helped to increase productivity by reducing work absenteeism due to sickness. The cash-for-education programme in Bangladesh raised productivity as well as boosted the lifetime earnings of its beneficiaries. The old-age grant programme in South Africa resulted in substantial poverty reduction, triggered intergenerational transfers, and eventually facilitated access to employment and created jobs. In the case of South Africa, studies suggest that small social protection transfers are often invested in income-generating activities, acquisition of productive assets and education, and can thus play an important role in alleviating poverty.

46. In sum, social protection is an effective way of reducing poverty, promoting social inclusion, and expanding opportunities, especially for disadvantaged groups. Social protection provisions stimulate demand, increase consumption, raise productivity and contribute to economic growth. A social protection system is an investment in people and their quality of life, and should go hand in hand with investment in human capital, education and training.

47. Whereas social protection can be viewed as an expression of social justice or a human right, stakeholders must also be convinced that it is affordable. The benefits of social protection are real, and the current debate should go beyond the merits of social protection to concentrate on practical modalities for implementation. A recent study suggests that a minimum social protection package could be affordable even in low-income countries.[5]

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[4] Michael Cichon, "Building the case for a global social floor", presentation made at the side event on the theme Global Social Floor during the forty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development, United Nations, 7 February 2008, New York.

[5] ILO, Social Security Department, *Can low income countries afford basic social security?*, Social Security Policy Briefings, Paper 3 (Geneva, 2008), p. 5.

48. Under its decent work agenda, ILO is currently exploring ways to operationalize basic universal social protection programmes worldwide as part of global efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. This global social protection floor initiative would consist of the following programmes: universal child benefits; universal access to essential health services; modest financial relief for the working poor unable to earn enough for their families to escape poverty as a result of underemployment or low productivity; and basic tax-financed pensions for older persons, persons with disabilities and those who have lost the main breadwinner in a family.

49. Extending social security at the national level requires a multipronged approach, that includes expanding and reforming statutory social insurance programmes, promoting community-based social insurance schemes and improving cost-effective tax-financed social benefits. At the international level, advocacy efforts are necessary to place social protection at the top of the development agenda, as well as to strengthen technical assistance and knowledge development.

B. Promoting youth employment

50. Compared to adults, young people are more than three times as likely to be unemployed. In 2005, youth unemployment stood at 85 million.[6] A quarter of all youth in sub-Saharan Africa, a third of all youth in Central and Eastern Europe, and roughly one in seven youths in developed countries are neither in education nor in employment.[7] As young people are staying longer in education, the declining share of youth in the working age population is a major concern for societies with ageing populations, imposing challenges on social security systems, pensions, and health care. Of those youth who do find employment, roughly one in five, or some 125 million young people, can be classified as "working poor", working for less than $1 per day, while some 300 million young people are estimated to be working at the $2 per day level.[8] Underemployment, and the absence of decent working conditions for those working in the informal economy expand the problem further. It should also be noted that, increasingly, young people entering the labour market do so with a higher educational level than the previous generation of youth. This has created expectations on the part of young people that imperfect labour markets cannot always fulfil. The challenge in the current volatile global economic environment is thus to create opportunities for young people to participate in the world of work in ways that promote economic and social development.[9]

51. A recent comprehensive review of policy interventions, based on evidence from 289 studies in 84 countries, provides some valuable insight into the wide range of measures implemented to support youth employment.[10] The main finding of the study is that skill training is the most common type of intervention across the globe,

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[6] ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth* (Geneva, 2006).

[7] E/CN.5/2007/3, para. 1. See also A/62/122.

[8] ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth* (Geneva, 2006), p. 4.

[9] *Report of the World Social Situation 2007: The Employment Imperative* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.07.IV.9).

[10] Gordon Betcherman and others, *A Review of Interventions to Support Young Workers: Findings of the Youth Employment Inventory* (*The World Bank*, Washington, D.C., 2007).

followed by comprehensive multiservice interventions. OECD countries seem to be the most active in putting in place youth employment support programmes. As far as beneficiaries are concerned, it appears that when specific disadvantaged groups are targeted they are most often youth with low income/education, followed by gender-identified groups and then by persons with disabilities. A major caveat emerging from the study is the universal need to upgrade the evaluation of youth employment interventions, especially for cost-effectiveness. At present, the availability of proper evaluations is dismal, and this factor often leads to overestimation of the actual impact of the programmes and, as a consequence, hinders efforts to ameliorate them.

52. Government interventions, for example, through wage subsidies and fiscal incentives to hiring companies, can help first-time job seekers. In contrast, lowering wages for young workers has proven not to be effective in curbing youth unemployment. Another popular remedy, namely to raise the quality and relevance of national education systems and vocational training schemes, has been an effective way of somewhat smoothening the school-to-work transition.

53. Many countries have passed legislation that seeks to empower young people in their aspirations. Furthermore, two intergovernmental instruments have been adopted: the African Youth Charter, adopted by the African Union at its Summit in Banjul in 2006, and the Ibero-American Convention on Youth Rights. The Charter has currently received 5 of the 15 ratifications it requires to enter into force,[11] while the Ibero-American Convention on Youth Rights entered into force on 1 March 2008 after having received its fifth ratification. Both instruments cover the whole range of rights that pertain to young persons, including their right to work and to decent working conditions, social protection and vocational education.[12]

54. A proposal has also been made to define goals and targets for monitoring progress of young people in the global economy.[13] Targets have been proposed to halve, between 2005 and 2015, the proportion of youth who are neither in education nor in employment, as well as the proportion of youth in vulnerable employment, and to reduce, by 2015, the gap between youth and adult unemployment rates.

55. These regional and international initiatives, as well as the development of national action plans to promote youth employment, have been supported by the Youth Employment Network (YEN), a joint initiative by ILO, the United Nations and the World Bank. YEN was created in 2001 at the initiative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to facilitate and support the commitment of the Millennium Summit to develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work.

56. YEN seeks to encourage countries to take stock of their national policies, prepare national action plans on youth employment and compare progress with their peers. National action plans on youth employment, promoted under the aegis of YEN, provide a framework for an integrated approach focusing on employment, employability, entrepreneurship and equal opportunities. YEN further aims to strengthen policy coherence on youth employment within the United Nations system as well as among national stakeholders, increase youth participation in global, regional, national and local policymaking, and promote and support constituency-

[11] The text of the Charter is available at http://www.uneca.org/adf/docs/African_Youth_Charter.pdf.

[12] More information at www.oij.org.

[13] A/62/61/Add.1-E/2007/7/Add.1.

building, including through capacity-building, advocacy and awareness-raising activities on youth employment. The *Guide for the Preparation of National Action Plans on Youth Employment* was released recently.[14]

57. Currently, 21 lead countries have volunteered to share their experiences and guide the way in formulating national action plans on youth employment. Over the past few years, YEN has focused on supporting lead countries in developing national action plans on youth employment, a vehicle to prioritize and operationalize youth employment. The lead country process has been an important tool for raising awareness and helping to advocate for youth employment. As benchmarks of successful youth employment policies and their underlying indicators are still at an early stage, there is a need to take this initiative to the next step by providing lead countries with assistance in monitoring the implementation of national action plans.

58. To advance this process, ILO, with the support of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, hosted a lead country meeting in June 2008 in Geneva on establishing benchmarks for national action plans as a tool for monitoring performance and identifying indicators of success for youth employment policies. The meeting brought together government representatives responsible for the implementation of national action plans and employment and evaluation experts.

59. Other important initiatives of YEN include the creation of the Youth Consultative Group, which will work to represent the concerns of young people on: the functioning and strategic priorities of YEN and support for youth participation in development; developing and implementing youth participation mechanisms; producing enhanced indicators on youth employment; reinforcing linkages between youth employment and poverty reduction initiatives; and implementing a review of youth employment policies at the country level.

C. Mainstreaming disability in the development agenda

60. Mainstreaming disability in the development agenda is a strategy for achieving equality of opportunities for persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities represent around 10 per cent of the global population, and 80 per cent of them live in developing countries. They are more likely to be illiterate, unemployed and underemployed, and to experience ill health and poor nutrition than persons without disabilities. Persons with disabilities face barriers to education, employment and public services. Many live in poverty when they are prevented from fully participating in the economic and social life of their communities. In developing countries, 80 per cent of persons with disabilities are unemployed, while the figure is between 50 and 70 per cent in industrialized countries.

61. As a human rights instrument with an explicit social development dimension, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is both a human rights treaty and a development tool. The Convention identifies disability as an issue to be considered in all programming, rather than as a stand-alone thematic issue, and requires all States parties to implement measures ensuring full and equal

[14] Gianni Rosas and Giovanna Rossignotti, *Guide for the Preparation of National Action Plans on Youth Employment* (ILO, Geneva, 2008).

participation of persons with disabilities in society. However, disability-specific actions and programming may also be required, depending on national context.

62. Effective mainstreaming of disability in the development agenda necessitates improving awareness and involvement of all relevant stakeholders at the global, national and local levels. It also requires that efforts be made to broaden the equitable participation of persons with disabilities at all levels of decision-making. Persons with disabilities should be involved in the formulation and monitoring of the implementation of policies aiming at benefiting them directly. All development projects, including those involving gender, indigenous peoples, involuntary resettlement, social participation and inclusive governance, should take into consideration persons with disabilities and their families among the projects' regular beneficiaries.

63. Policies and programmes design is crucial to the success of efforts to mainstream disability in development. It is important to ensure that overall development efforts are directed to attain impacts that are equitably beneficial for men and women with disabilities. In addition, those designing the policies and programmes must identify barriers, including societal attitudes, that hinder persons with disabilities from participating in and benefiting from public policies and programmes, and assess the costs and benefits of specific actions to remove these barriers. Ensuring effective programme delivery and establishing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to measure progress are vital to success as well.

64. Within this context, it is important to review existing national legal and regulatory frameworks and ensure that laws and regulations are non-discriminatory and comply with the spirit and letter of the Convention. States will further need to formulate effective policies and institutions that will transform the provisions of the Convention into practices that will have a real impact on the lives of persons with disabilities. They will have to ensure that the monitoring and evaluation system put in place includes assessment of the on-the-ground impact on the lives of persons with disabilities.

65. To a significant extent, the mainstreaming of disability in development rests on providing persons with disabilities with access to employment. This involves creating equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in the open job market, including promoting their access to education and training and provision of reasonable accommodation in the workplace. In this regard, anti-discrimination legislation and non-discriminatory human resources policies are of utmost importance.

66. Actions that have proved critical to gender mainstreaming may also be relevant to mainstreaming disability in the development agenda: system-wide responsibility for disability mainstreaming resting at the highest level within agencies; participation of persons with disabilities at all levels of decision-making; strong accountability/monitoring mechanism; benchmarking; allocation of adequate resources; and disability-specific and targeted policies and programmes.

67. Capacity-building and training will have to be supported on a large scale. Technical assistance programmes need to be designed so as to ensure that persons with disabilities and their organizations can fully participate in the design and monitoring of policies and programmes. Such programmes should also target implementing agencies and their staff.

68. Another top priority lies in developing a disability knowledge and research network on all issues related to the operationalization of the Convention, ranging from data collection to legal, technical and policy expertise.

IV. Conclusion

69. The following points are based on the deliberations and outcome of the forty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development as part of the follow-up to implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. They are presented to the Assembly to further advance the social development agenda, including achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all.

70. To reduce poverty and promote social integration, it is critical to focus on expanding employment and decent work opportunities for all. Full and productive employment and decent work for all should be put at the centre of economic and social policy-making at both national and international levels. In achieving this goal, it is important to integrate economic and social policies, notably ensuring that social objectives are mainstreamed into macroeconomic policies.

71. In promoting employment and decent work, priority needs to be placed on investing in and further promoting agricultural development and small and medium-sized enterprises, and entrepreneurship. Promoting employment and decent work also requires investing in education, training and skills development, strengthening social protections systems and extending labour standards. Specific programmes aimed at integrating women, young people, persons with disabilities, older persons, indigenous peoples and other groups into the labour market and overcoming discrimination in employment should be developed.

72. Advancing the employment goal requires close collaboration of the organizations of the United Nations system and a commitment to mainstreaming the goals of full and productive employment and decent work in the programmes and policies they support.

73. Efforts are needed to make social protection systems more effective and responsive to economic changes. Governments should aim at providing workers in the informal economy with basic social protection to reduce their vulnerability. In developing countries, expanding basic social protection programmes should become an integral part of the national development and poverty reduction strategies.

74. Ensuring the coherence of existing laws from a gender perspective and designing policy interventions that target all types of discrimination are essential to eliminating violence against women. Measuring and monitoring trends in women's labour market outcomes relative to men's should be used to assess the impact of those policies.

75. Priority attention should be given by Governments to promoting youth employment through developing and implementing national action plans in

collaboration with all relevant partners. Countries that have not done so are encouraged to join the Youth Employment Network.

76. **Governments should pursue their efforts to mainstream the concerns of older persons into their policy agenda. They should consult with older persons and their organizations in planning, implementing and evaluating policies on ageing, poverty eradication and social protection.**

77. **Similar efforts should be made to associate persons with disabilities and their organizations in planning, implementing and evaluating all development programmes and policies. The development and dissemination of data on disability are needed to improve programming and targeting within the framework of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the local, national and international levels.**